

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0577

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY NASSAU

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

USINT HAVANA

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 3113

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, JM

SUBJECT: RUMORS OF SNAP ELECTION PROMPT DENIAL FROM MANLEY

1. OVER THE LAST SEVERAL WEEKS THERE HAVE BEEN RUMORS THAT A GENERAL ELECTION MAY BE IN THE EARLY OFFING. THESE RUMORS FINALLY SURFACED IN THE PRESS THE MORNING OF APRIL 4 AND LED PRIME MINISTER MICHAEL MANLEY TO A QUICK DENIAL ON THE EVENING OF THE SAME DAY. IN A SPEECH INAUGURATING " NATIONAL EXPORT WEEK", MANLEY SAID "... THE GOVERNMENT HAS FOUR (SIC) MORE YEARS IN OFFICE IN THE PRESENT TERM AND WILL REMAIN IN OFFICE FOR THE FOUR YEARS."

2. WHETHER THE PRIME MINISTER'S DENIAL WILL END THE RUMORS IS HARD TO SAY. A NUMBER OF OBSERVERS SUGGEST THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAS AT LEAST CONTEMPLATED THE IDEA OF CALLING A SNAP ELECTION FOLLOWING THE NEGOTIATION OF AN EXTENDED FUND FACILITY (EFF) WITH INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF). THESE OBSERVERS SAY THAT THE NEW AGREEMENT WITH THE IMF WILL FORCE JAMAICA TO UNDERTAKE
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FAR GREATER AUSTERITIES THAN HAS BEEN THE CASE TO DATE. THEY SAY THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD DESCRIBE THE NEGOTIATION OF THE EFF AS A VICTORY, AND THEN CALL THE ELECTION-- IN FULL KNOWLEDGE THAT THE HARDSHIPS WHICH LIE AHEAD WOULD SOON REDUCE FURTHER THE RULING PEOPLE'S NATIONAL PARTY'S POPULARITY AND SHARPLY REDUCE ITS CHANCES OF RETURNING TO POWER WERE THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT

TO REMAIN IN OFFICE UNTIL ITS TERM ENDS IN DECEMBER, 1981.

3. THE OPPOSITION JAMAICA LABOUR PARTY HAS APPARENTLY
TAKEN THE RUMORS SERIOUSLY. OVER THE LAST SEVERAL DAYS, THE
JLP HAS RUN SEVERAL FULL-PAGE ADS CRITICIZING THE
GOVERNMENT. A JLP SOURCE SAYS THAT THE ADS ARE PART
OF A PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN WHICH WILL, IF THE
MONEY HOLDS OUT, CONTINUE OVER THE NEXT TWO OR THREE
MONTHS. THE SOURCE SAID THE POSSIBILITY OF A SNAP
ELECTION WAS VERY MUCH IN THE MIND OF THE JLP LEADERSHIP
WHEN IT DECIDED ON THE CAMPAIGN.
IRVING

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